

THOMAS HAMILTON TEDDER

1889-1970

A Brief Biography

Presented to

Earl Lamar Reece

by

Thomas H. Tedder, Jr.

In Loving Memory

February 26, 1989

125 Sherry Drive
Hammond, LA 70401
February 23, 1989

Dear Earl,

I hope you are feeling good today, we are about to get over our flu and are feeling pretty good now.

The enclosed paper about Daddy is one I wrote to give to his grandchildren on his 100th birthday. If he had lived until next Sunday he would have been 100. I thought you might enjoy reading it.

Rojean and I have both decided to retire from teaching at the end of this year. We will probably continue to stay in contact with the schools by substituting and by doing volunteer work, but we want to have some time to do some traveling and some other fun things while we are both still healthy.

Our daughter, Jan and her son, Stephen have been in Washington, D.C. this week on a school trip. Our granddaughter, Anne has stayed with us since her father leaves for work very early in the morning. We have really enjoyed having her with us.

We will probably see you during the week end prior to Easter. We are going to see Tommy and also Mary Alice that week and Ruth Carolyn is going with us. Pauline will possibly go too.

Take care of yourself, and give Sarah Alice my regards.

Love,

Thomas

The purpose of this paper is to furnish some background information on my father so that his grandchildren might remember him more vividly and perhaps share some of him with their children and their grandchildren. Since he married late in life he never knew any of his great-grandchildren.

If he had had the opportunity I am confident that the great-grandchildren would have given him the same sense of pride he felt in his children and grandchildren.

Thomas Hamilton (Tom) Tedder was born on a farm in Clarke County, Mississippi. He worked on the family farm and attended the one room schools of the day. Since he was one of the younger children of the family he and his baby sister, Martha, were allowed to attend school more regularly than were the other children.

He told me many, many stories of his childhood and of his early adult years. I cherish these stories greatly and hope that by relating some of them here their enjoyment will be shared with those family members whom he loved dearly.

Thomas Tedder

Following are some facts and some recollections, some of which might be fuzzy, of my father.

Name: Thomas Hamilton Tedder

Born: February 26, 1909 in Clarke County, Mississippi

Parents: Thomas Delworth and Mary Elizabeth Henderson Tedder

Brother: Zaccariah James (Jim) Tedder

Sisters: Mary Alice Tedder

Susan Cardenia (Suzie) Tedder Reece Hays

Sarah Ann (Sallie) Tedder

Rachel Caldonia Tedder Pickard

Martha Elizer Tedder Pickard

(Note: Jim, Rachel and Martha married brothers and sister)

Occupation: Farmer, Teacher and School Administrator

(Note: He taught school forty-seven years including the year in which he turned seventy-nine years of age)

Major residence: Causeyville Community, Route 3, Meridian, Mississippi

I do not know much about his church activities prior to his marriage. Aunt Alice and Aunt Sallie did not hold membership in any church, but they were baptized by a minister who was a member of the Church of God. Daddy was good friends with "Preacher Griffin", a Church of God minister for many years. After daddy and mother married he was converted and he was baptized into the membership of Hebron Baptist Church. He was baptized in a pond

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slightly southwest of Why Not near the home of Miss Ella Dearman who taught with Daddy and Mother at Why Not. While they lived at Suquelena he taught a Sunday School class at the Baptist Church on Sunday mornings and another at the Methodist Church on Sunday afternoons. He was active in the Baptist church in each of the communities in which he lived during the school years, and at Causeyville Baptist Church in summers and during his retirement years. He was happy to see each of his children make their profession of faith in Christ as their personal savior, and to see each of them happily married and to have families of their own.

Died: November 22, 1970 at home of a heart attack. He had taught his Sunday School class at Causeyville Baptist Church on Sunday before he died on Tuesday. He was buried in the Hays Cemetery, which is located less than one mile from his residence. His mother and father, maternal grandmother, one maternal aunt, each of his sisters and his brother together with each of their spouses, both of his wives, and ten of his nieces and nephews are also buried there.

My grandfather, Tom "Pa" Tedder lost the mother of his children at an early age (43), had seventeen grandchildren and he died suddenly at the age of eighty-one. My father also lost the mother of his children at an early age (40), had seventeen grandchildren and died suddenly at the age of eighty-one.

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Married: Ruth Nora Allen on August 2, 1927. She died on January 26, 1942 and he married Virginia Camille Shirley on December 24, 1944. She died on April 19, 1975.

Children: Thomas H. Tedder, Jr. 6-9-28, married Hazel Rojean Boutwell 6-29-31; Ruth Carolyn Tedder 7-6-29, married D.W. Carr 3-25-26; Jack Allen Tedder 10-19-31, married Mernelese Miller 7-27-32; Gerald Marshall (Jerry) Tedder 9-30-34, married Pauline Usry 9-23-35; Mary Alice Tedder 12-13-36, married Thomas Richard (Tom) Volk 12-16-27; and Martha Virginia Tedder 12-28-41, married Donald Germany 8-2-34.

Education: B.S., Mississippi Southern College, 1949, Mathematics; M.Ed., Mississippi Southern College, 1951, Educational Administration.

Note: He never attended high school. He completed the eighth grade one year and was employed as the teacher of that same school the next year. He had taken and passed the state teacher's examination during the summer. He taught his sister, Martha, that first year. All of his college and graduate work was done during summer terms.

Some of the schools in which he taught during his early years were Pine Knot, Ebenezer, and Center Hill in Lauderdale County and Shady Grove in Clarke County. He also taught in the following schools and counties in the years indicated.

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1923-28	Vinville	Lauderdale County
1928-31	Suqualena	Lauderdale County
1931-33	Long Creek	Lauderdale County (H.G.Pickard, Supt.)
1933-37	Why Not	Lauderdale County
1937-39	Causeyville	Lauderdale County
1939-41	Long Creek	Lauderdale County
1941-42	Bay Springs	Jasper County
1942-43	He did not teach, worked in a shipyard in Mobile, Ala.	
1943-45	Pineville	Smith County
1945-47	McCall Creek	Franklin County
1947-48	Independence	Franklin County
1948-49	Strengthford	Wayne County
1949-53	Damascus	Kemper County
1953-54	Good Hope	Newton County
1954-55 *	Red Lick	Jefferson County
1955-57 **	Beat Four	Clarke County
1958-69 ***	Jackson Central	Jackson County

* He retired at the end of the 1954-55 school year, and moved back to his home in Lauderdale County.

** In December, 1955 his brother-in-law Grady Pickard, who was Superintendent of Beat Four School District, where I was teaching, died and my father was asked to succeed him. He taught the remaining part of that

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year and the next year before retiring again. It was my privilege to serve with him and to learn from him as I had done from my Uncle Grady Pickard. I learned a great deal from both men and I value those lessons highly. While I was serving under them I prepared monthly and annual reports of various types and generally assisted in the administration of the school. At the time of my father's retirement from Beat Four, the state mandated a school district consolidation. The number of districts in the state was reduced from 2251 to 151 overnight!

I succeeded my father, but I took over as a principal whereas he had been a superintendent. The last year of his Superintendency his salary was \$4,000 per year which was the highest salary he ever made. I believe his salary his first year he taught was \$35.00 per month for four months, or \$140.00 per year. He retired in 1957 at \$90.00 per month plus \$125.00 per month from Social Security. Mama retired the same year at \$30.00 per month and she was not old enough to draw Social Security.

*** In the fall of 1968 he returned to teaching at Jackson County High School. Mama had a nephew, Durwood Shirley, who was teaching there and their school needed elementary school teachers and high school mathematics teachers. They both accepted positions for that year; Daddy taught only one year and Mama taught two years. When Mama called me to tell me that they had accepted teaching positions, I was very frightened. Daddy had had some heart problems, and I was afraid that he could not, at his age, make all the adjustments which would be necessary. He had always been the head

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of the school, this year he would not; he had never taught in a "large" school, this one was very large; he had never taught in the "Gulf Coast atmosphere" which is different from the "hill country"; he had never taught black children, and this school was thoroughly integrated; and he had never taught the "new math". I was afraid that a 79 year old man could not make the necessary adjustments to all of that, but he had no problems with any of them. I think that that was the happiest year of his "retirement". The school could not contract with him because of his age, so they employed him as a substitute, and he "substituted" in the same classes each day. He was paid \$15.00 per day, which was \$15.00 per day more than he would have gotten sitting at home and his retirement income was not affected. Mama received quite an increase in her salary and her retirement income was therefore increased significantly.

The usual pattern was for us to live at our Causeyville home except for the months school was in session and then to move to the school community. Of course this involved two moves per year. I remember one particular year when we moved either to or from Why Not, we moved in a mule drawn wagon. Brady Shirley, a cousin who lived where Jack Tedder now lives helped us with the move and I was privileged to ride on the wagon all the way! There were three consecutive years when we lived at home, however. The last year at Causeyville and the two years at Long Creek. Long Creek did not have a teachers home.

In his early years in the profession, Daddy heard that a school had a

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vacancy for a teacher and he went to apply for the job. The president of the Board of Trustees met with him and said, "Tell me, young feller, do you have any experience guarding convicts?" Daddy answered, "No, Sir, but ~~my~~ always thought I would enjoy it." He got the job!

Dad was known as a strict disciplinarian in the operation of his school, as well as his home. I remember an incident which occurred during the 1940-41 academic year. Ralph, a well behaved boy who was in the seventh grade and who was about 14 years of age was studying and Bud, who was in the same grade, but probably about 16, came back and started making noise. Ralph asked him to be quiet and Bud became angry and started cursing Ralph. Ralph rose to his feet and Bud hit him. When he did Ralph returned the blow and Daddy heard the noise, turned and said, "Go to it, boys." They fought for several minutes and Ralph was winning when Bud said, "I am whipped." Dad told Ralph to let him up and when he did Bud pulled out his pocket knife. Dad took the knife away from Bud and he ran from the building yelling, "I am going to get my daddy, big boy!" Now, Dad had taught Bud's father several years before and he had pulled a knife on Dad, and Dad had disarmed him with a stick of stove wood. That afternoon after school we went by and Dad talked with Bud's father. I was very frightened because I did not know what to expect. Their conversation was not one of mutual respect, but no fist fight took place. I was much relieved when we finally left that home and went to ours.

During the 1938-39 school year a boy named Buddy who was in the

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seventh grade and probably 18 years old committed some type of disciplinary violation and Dad used his belt on him, as he did on all those who needed it. Buddy got mad and walked out holding an open pocket knife in his hand. Several days later he came back and was permitted to return to school after an oral apology to the class. During the same year a boy named Lavelle was enrolled at Why Not, and rode a bus which stopped at Causeyville, which was our school. He got off the bus and was harrassing some of the "little" boys at Causeyville. Dad looked out the window and saw what was going on and he jumped out of the window to take charge of the situation. The window from which he jumped was at least 12-15 feet high and Dad was approximately 50 years old but he did not hesitate to jump. During that same year a boy named Joseph had gotten into some type of trouble and had been punished, so he transferred to Vinville. He lived next door to our school. One day he had not gone to his school and he got into a fight with a boy named Charles who was one of our students. Joseph went inside his house and got his BB gun and started shooting at Charles. One of our larger boys named Roy went to the second floor of the building and began shooting at Joseph with a sling shot. Jack Tedder was carrying rocks for him! Finally a boy named Hyland crept up and tackled Joseph and took the BB gun away from him.

Causeyville was invited to participate in a basketball tournament at Herbert Springs in Newton (or Neshoba) County. It was my privilege to go to the games even though I was not large enough to play on the team. We were scheduled to play House School. House had a "boy" who was 27 years

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old and in the seventh grade! Daddy protested that the boy was not eligible because the rules said a student was ineligible after age 21. The House coach agreed that he would be ineligible to play on a high school team, but insisted that there were no rules governing elementary schools and that the man would play! He did. I don't remember who won the game.

When he was teaching at McCall Creek there was a boy in the eleventh grade who was 23 years old. The boy violated some rule and Daddy started to whip him. The boy said, "You are not going to whip me, I'll quit school first". Dad replied, "Quit school if you want to, but you are going to take a whipping first". The boy took his whipping and stayed in school and graduated. In all his years as a school administrator, he never suspended a student from school!

The year World War II started Daddy was serving as High School Principal at Bay Springs, the largest school I ever attended. They had a football team and would play eleven-man or six-man, according to the wishes of the opponent. I was in the ninth grade, Ruth Carolyn was in the eighth, Jack was a fourth grader, Jerry was in the second grade and Mary Alice started to school even though she was under age. Daddy's salary was \$90.00 per month for eight months, or \$720.00 per year. Martha Virginia was born in December of that year and our Mother died in January, 1942. Daddy was left with six children, the oldest of whom was thirteen. Mr. Narro was our neighbor and he had recently lost his wife and had been left with a large number of young children. He came over and visited with Daddy for a long

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time one night. Daddy later told me that Mr. Narro helped him to adjust to the loss of Mother. He told him that time is a great healer. Soon after Mother died Mr. Bott, who was the Superintendent of Schools, resigned to take a defense job and Dad was appointed Superintendent. His salary was raised to \$200.00 per month and the use of a house. Daddy and Mr. Bott agreed that Mr. Bott would continue living in the teachers home, and that Mr. Bott would pay the rent on the house we were renting. Daddy was very popular there in Bay Springs, but he did not have a college degree and they would not re-appoint him as Superintendent, but asked him to return as Principal. He declined and went to Mobile, Alabama and worked in a shipyard until the beginning of the 1943-44 academic year.

Daddy was friends with Mr. Burl Hays, his wife "Miss Jenny" and their sons Parks, Dick, Ed, Oscar, and Walter. Mr. Parks was the father of Mrs. Sadie Johnson and James Hays. None of the other Hays boys had children; Mr. Walter married Aunt Suzie late in life after Uncle Tom Reece had died. There was a path approximately one mile long through a wooded area between the Tedder and Hays homes. One time daddy had been over visiting with his friends and was returning home along this path well after dark. There was no moon that night and it was very, very dark, but he had traveled the path many times so he had no fear about going that route. As he was walking along he saw a "man" standing in his path. Daddy said, "Hello", and the man did not answer. He said, "Hello" again and there was still no answer. Dad said, "Alright now, you had better speak". Still the man did not respond. Daddy said, "I'm going to give you one more chance to identify

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yourself or I am going to cut you." No answer. Daddy got his knife out of his pocket and stabbed the "man" only to realize that it was a big black pine stump! He had seen the stump many times but that time it "whipped" him by being silent!

On the night Rojean and I were married Daddy and the rest of the family were with us at the home of Bro. Estus Mason who was the pastor of South Side Baptist Church in Meridian. Daddy was seated in such position as to be facing Rojean and me, and when she attempted to place the ring on my finger, she could not get it over the knuckle and daddy saw the problem she was having and I thought that he was going to laugh out loud! He managed to keep quiet but he was quite tickled! A few weeks later he and Mama along with Jerry and Mary Alice came to Laurel to eat a meal with us. Rojean was very nervous, and I told her not to be disappointed if Daddy did not compliment her on her cooking. I said, "Daddy just does not brag on anybody." I thought that he would have something nice to say, but I wanted to be on the safe side! He was highly complimentary and Rojean was very pleased. The meal was very good, even though she was not an experienced cook.

In the fall of 1950 I was serving in the army and was stationed at Camp Polk, Louisiana and Jack was living at Raceland, Louisiana. Daddy and Mama made a trip to Louisiana to see both of us. As they were passing through a small South Louisiana town they stopped to get a cup of coffee. Daddy ordered coffee and the waitress said, "Do you want coffee or

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coffee-milk?" He answered, "Why, coffee, of course." She brought him some very strong Cajun coffee, and the next time she came his way he said, "Miss, could I please have some coffee-milk?" The next spring I had moved to Fort Bliss, Texas and had gotten my orders to go to Japan. I was granted a pre-embarkation leave and had come home for a visit. I visited with the family at Demascus where they were teaching. When Daddy carried me back to Meridian in order for me to catch the bus back to camp and then to Japan, we were both very emotionally moved. We would not look at each other, he just let me out of the car and said, "I'll see you." The Korean war was going on at the time and we did not know whether or not I would be sent to Korea. I later was, but survived with no injury.

In the years immediately preceeding World War II we lived at home and Daddy and Mother taught at Long Creek. Jack and I had as one of our before-school chores the "task" of riding Old Bill, the mule and Old Pearl, the mare down to the creek to let them get water. One morning we were running back up the road and Old Pearl stumbled and fell. We did not know it then but apparently she broke her neck as she never held her head up-right again. The next morning when I got to the barn she was lying in the hallway and Daddy was shucking corn to feed the other animals. I asked him if Old Pearl was dead and he said she was. I thought I saw a drop of blood in the middle of her forehead, but I didn't say anything about it. Several years later Aunt Alice had a cow to get sick and she asked Daddy to kill her since it was feared she had rabies. Daddy killed her and then said, "That is the second thing I have killed which really hurt me." Aunt

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Alice said, "Old Pearl?" Daddy answered, "Yes."

Daddy liked to laugh, and did not mind telling stories on himself. During World War II, while working in the shipyard at Mobile, Alabama he rode the Greyhound bus to and from Meridian. One time he was going back toward Mobile when "nature called". He knew that he must get off the bus immediately and was making his way to the bus driver to tell him to let him off when they arrived at the bus station at one of the small towns along the way. He got off the bus as quickly as he could and hurried into the station and asked for directions to the restroom. The ticket agent pointed toward the rear of the station and Dad rushed inside. As he was sitting in a toilet stall he heard the voices of women! He then realized that he had gotten into the wrong rest room. He first thought that he would just sit still and the women would leave and would never know he was there. His bus was leaving in a very few minutes, however, so he ran out and the women got a good laugh at his expense!

In 1923 Daddy bought his first car. It was a new Model T Ford. The car cost about \$500.00, and he paid an additional \$70.00 to get a starter! The starter was optional equipment. After he had made the purchase, the salesman rode around the block and showed him how to drive and Dad went on home. He had never attempted to drive before that date. Shortly thereafter, Uncle Jim decided to buy a truck and wanted Daddy to go with him and show him how to drive it home. They got the truck and started home with Uncle Jim driving. Apparently Dad had taught him how to start the

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truck, but not how to stop it. They ran over a stump which was in the road and Daddy fell off and the truck ran over him! He was not hurt since the truck was very light in weight. He got up and began chasing it down the road before Uncle Jim finally killed the motor.

In 1931 Daddy ran for public office. He was a candidate for Lauderdale County Superintendent of Education. He had a Buick automobile and was getting ready to leave the house on a campaign trip when I got into the Buick (I was three years of age) and managed to get the motor started and "drove" the car down through the field and into a ditch. Later Daddy had much trouble with that car and sold it to Uncle Grady Pickard for \$5.00. He went to Meridian and bought a used Studebaker for \$100.00. He was very well pleased with the Studebaker and commented on what a good bargain he had gotten. Some two or three years later he traded the Studebaker for a Plymouth, and the day he drove the Plymouth home, Ruth Carolyn shouted, "Whoopse, new car!! Where did you get the hundred dollars?"

After the death of our mother daddy completed the year at Bay Springs and then went to work at the shipyard in Mobile. He boarded with Uncle J.T. and Aunt Mary Shelby. (Aunt Mary is the sister of our mother and she is the mother of Franck Allen Shelby) He was a safety inspector and his duties involved walking high beams looking for safety problems. He was fifty-three years of age when he took the job. He worked there the 1942-43 academic year and then took a position as superintendent of the school at

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Pineville in Smith County. Just prior to the beginning of the 1943 fall semester he and I went to Mobile to get his clothing and other personal belongings. Please remember that this was during World War II and it was almost impossible to buy automobile tires or tubes. Daddy borrowed a tire and tube from Uncle Grady Pickard for us to make the trip. We left Meridian at 3:00 one Friday afternoon and soon after we crossed the Alabama state line we had a blow-out. We put the spare on and continued on our way. After dark we had another blow-out, with no spare. We walked back to the nearest town (Chunchula, I think) to try to get help but were unable to do so at that time of night. We walked out into the woods and lay down on the ground and "slept" until Saturday morning. Somehow Dad made arrangements for a tire and we made it on into Mobile. Uncle J. T. helped dad to get two tires, two tubes and a spare wheel, so we thought we would leave there with two spare tires. We left at approximately 11:30 PM, however with no spare. The tubes which we had gotten were too rotten and would not hold a patch. Daddy told me to drive and to hold the speed to 15 miles per hour. (The state speed limit was 60, but a national speed limit of 35 had been put into place because of the shortage during the war.) After driving a few miles one of the tires developed a leak so we parked the car, locked it up and walked to the nearest town which was Citronelle, Alabama. (Daddy had bought me a new pair of shoes just before we left Meridian. I had gone barefoot all summer, and those new shoes were really hurting my feet.) At Citronelle we went into a night club to seek help since it was the only place open. I remember daddy buying us a Coca Cola and they charged us a dime for each coke. I had never heard of anyone

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paying more than a nickel for a soft drink! We could get no help there so we walked on down town and got a room for the remainder of the night. Sunday morning we were able to get the tire repaired and to get a spare. We drove on home by driving very slowly and by stopping every few miles and rotating the spare with a tire which would have developed a large "knot" on the side. When we got home daddy told me to jack up the car, give Uncle Grady his tire, put blocks under the car and he would let it sit there until he could get some tires. We went to Pineville with no car. Daddy, Ruth Carolyn and I rode with the man who moved us. After several weeks, or months, Daddy hitched a ride to Meridian and came back with the car and four "brand new re-caps"! Ruth Carolyn and I were so very happy to have a car, even though we did not get to use it very often. Even though we now had some tires, we had problems getting gasoline. Daddy was issued a "B" gasoline rationing sticker. I think he was allowed to buy about ten gallons of gasoline per month. Jack, Jerry, Mary Alice and Martha Virginia did not move to Pineville at that time, but lived with Aunt Alice and Aunt Sally. After Daddy remarried the following year Jack, Jerry and Mary Alice moved to Pineville also.

Daddy enjoyed sports; he liked to hunt and fish, and he was always involved with sports at school. He refereed the first basketball game he ever saw! He was already teaching when basketball was introduced to the area so he bought a rule book and organized a team for his school as did the other teachers in the county. The first game he scheduled was at his school and since the other coach had not seen a game either, Daddy refereed

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it. He had some very good teams in the early years, especially at Vimville. His girls team was outstanding one year. They did not have a play-off system to determine a state champion, but his team went as far as they could. He also had one or two outstanding years with the Vimville boys team. He coached me my last two years in school, and he also coached Ruth Carolyn, Jerry and Mary Alice. Jack went to school at Beat Four, so he had another coach, and I coached Martha Virginia.

I asked each of his seventeen grandchildren to write a short statement concerning their best recollection of their granddaddy. Some of them were quite young at the time of his death and could remember very little, if anything. The statements which were received follow:

Tanya: "Long walks in the woods and his naming every tree, bush, bird, etc. along the way; his two ugly dogs which he loved; taking a bath in a wash tub in his den."

Sherry: "Sitting on the swing on his front porch; he always asked about my grades in school; also chasing chickens & "biddies" around the house. He usually gave me a baby chick to take home with me. I remember his horses, too, especially one named Baby Girl."

Russell: "He liked his old horse, Don, because his speed was a slow walk, and he loved fried catfish. I remember watching him pick the bones until they were clean as a whistle."

Anthony: "Going up to Granddaddy's the day he died, with Raphael, Donald Wayne and Mother, then riding out to the hospital with Uncle D.W. where Daddy came to get us."

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Raphael: "The only thing I can recall about Granddaddy Tedder is seeing him sitting on his front porch wearing a hat."

Maria: "He was tall and thin."

Tommy: "What I remember most about granddaddy was his love for his friends. He and grandmother were always doing something for other people. Whether it was working in church or school or in everyday life he would always lend a hand. I remember I once stayed a couple of nights with them and we went into town. On the way back we stopped three times to help other people who were stopped on the side of the road. I may not have understood then but I do now."

Melanie: "The thing I best remember about my Granddaddy Tedder is probably less a memory than an impression. I have a picture of myself at about five, just talking away to my Granddaddy as we sit in the double chair of my swing set. Somehow he folded his tall frame into that tiny kid's chair to spend time with me. That's the strongest impression I carry of my Granddaddy."

Jan: "Granddaddy Tedder was always a very special person to me. He always seemed extremely tall and he laughed a lot. His love for his children and grandchildren was always evident. This love has carried over to the six children he helped raise. There are very few families that continue to gather at least once a year to keep a family together. As a child I always loved to swing on the porch at Granddaddy's house and to build straw houses in the front yard. As a youth I remember the pride of being Tom Tedder's granddaughter. In the Causeyville community he seemed to be respected by everyone."